









## The branding process for healthcare centers: Operational strategies from consumer's identification to market development

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### ABSTRACT

Medical centers need branding approach to improve their position in patients' minds. This study was carried out using mixed method. The participants included main experts, hospital managers and headquarters of the Ministry of Health. The data collection tool was a semi-structured interview and a researcher-made questionnaire. Branding process was conceptualized in 5 steps, including Market Identification, Brand Identity, Brand Positioning, Development and Consolidation Strategy. All path coefficients were defined in the range. The results of the indices showed that the fit was good and the final model was valid. The activities of Medical centers should be based on the identification of the target market. Unique services with new knowledge and equipment and experienced clinical staff to meet patients' needs with appropriate price and quality have to be provided.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 17 July 2019  
Accepted 11 January 2020

### Keywords

Branding process; medical centers; operational strategies; consumer's identification; market development; hospital; structural equation modeling; patient

## Introduction and background

Today, branding is the basis of service marketing. In the service sector, the concept and nature of the service institution are related to the brand. In fact, the brand and its features are shaped by all the members of the company [1,2]. Service institutions, such as health centers, can overcome the problems due to their intangibles services through branding [3]. In this regard, the goals of successful health marketing are including: recognizing the methods of providing medical services, their features, benefits and limitations, as well as the facilities and equipment used to provide them for effective decision making, along with patients' satisfaction in the demand dimension, and treatment staff's satisfaction in the dimension of providing medical services [4–6]. In fact, the healthcare brand image creates a framework in which customers choose the service as purchasing goods and select their own service center according to objective criteria [7]. In this regard, the organization, with a focus on branding and creating a successful brand, can have a greater chance of showing its competencies and capabilities to competitors and providing value added to the customers [8,9]. Furthermore, a service institution, by adopting appropriate strategies and emphasizing on their preservation, can convince customers of their abilities and attract the attention of all customers from target customers to end customers [10,11].

In recent years, various studies have been carried out on the branding processes in health centers [12], such as Berry's study which was conducted on branding process steps, including offering a new brand, changing the slogan, and providing a desirable and dynamic service to respond to patients' demands in the U.S. health centers [13], Levin's study on branding strategies in the U.S. health centers [14], study titled by 'The Effective Factors in Branding of Hospitals in India' [15], the study on the application of branding strategies in health centers of China [16], and study of the role of affordable strategies, distinct services, and desirable facilities on patients' motivation in private health centers of Malaysia [17]. Given the importance of branding process and the effective implementation of its strategies, health centers need to first recognize its steps and, secondly, implement strategies with the most priority with respect to their limitations and facilities. Accordingly, this study aimed to conceptualize branding steps of medical services in the form of a comprehensive process model using opinions of experts and managers of Iran health system.

## Methodology

This study aimed to conceptualize the dimensions of the medical service branding process using mixed method in Iran health centers, 2018.